

8BIT

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL 8-BIT COMPUTER USERS

Issue 16

April to June 1997

Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs. CB6 2RA

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EDITOR'S COLUMN - ISSUE 16

This is another unique issue of 8BIT in many ways - it's just the way it turned out.

As well as the usual opening with a 'Big Feature' - this time on Databases, the PcW16 pages, and the pages of display advertisements for the various 8-bit suppliers and supporters, you will find the 'News' and 'Shorts' pages have grown this time to squeeze out most of the space which is usually filled by other feature articles. Even the pages of small advertisements take up less space than they have before.

So what to do with all the features which, my conscience prods me, demand publication?

Well, if you regard this edition as part one of a pair, part two (the next one) will be a 'no advertisements - all text' issue to ensure full value across the pair. If time allows, it will follow in time to stand about half way between the usual publication dates. We shall have to see.

Some items can be covered in a few paragraphs, some need a page or more, and the smaller items this time do show just how much is happening in terms of diverse computer uses and new releases. Some new software items may be a while coming, but at least they are coming, and most publishers would prefer to be responsible and get things right first rather than rush out a bugged version and let the customers struggle until the working one appears. Happy Easter, all.

Brian Watson

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INTRODUCTION

As there are some who use their computer almost exclusively for games or word processing, so there are those who are devotees, to the point of obsession, of information recording and the use of databases. What the attraction is, and how you can actually impose a little more order on your life without too much computing time, is what this article is about. Coverage is from 'basics' to 'creative thinking' but I hope there will be something of value to all. At the risk of covering ground which some already know well, I will start by attempting to answer the old favourite, much beloved by hack journalists, "What is a database?"

According to my dictionary, the word database is "a computer-related term meaning an organised collection of information which can be accessed in a variety of ways". I would argue that the computer connection is not crucial and that a paper database (such as an address book) is not a contradiction in terms. The word 'datum' simply means a piece of information, a note, but it is like 'trouser'; theoretically possible, but more useful in the plural. Data is information, and database is the name used to describe the collection.

It is often the case that one can be using a database but be more comfortable with its commercial name: **CEEFAX**, Directory Enquiries, **Masterfile** are all examples where information, stored in a logical way, can then be used as required. That **CEEFAX** appears on television and needs a hand-held controller to get at it, and getting a phone number from Directory Enquiries usually needs the assistance of an operator at the exchange, only serves to show how diverse databases and their uses can be. What becomes apparent is that a little order imposed on the information makes the job of accessing it or using it in practical and creative ways easier, and this is where the programmers can help us out. Database programs all require some rules to be followed to be effective in their purpose and some terms are common to all types.

THE TERMS USED

The usual analogy to describe a database is that of 'cards in a card index box' and, although this is restricting in terms of considering more creative applications, it will do for now to describe the basic features. So, continuing with the 'cards in a box' idea, the term used for the whole collection of 'cards' is 'the database'. This information may be stored as one datafile on disk or, if it is more manageable (especially to work within 8-bit computers' limitations), it may be split into a series of smaller files. As long as the program knows what's happening this may not concern you, but it is often possible to look at the directory of a disk to see how many database-related files are on a disk. The program's manual may tell you which special filename extensions the datafile names will have in the disk's directory. Do not be tempted to erase *any* of the database-related files unless you are certain they will not be needed for the operation of the program.

It is good practice to use a separate disk, and ideally a second drive, for storing datafiles. As well as minimising risk of damage to the program disk (always use a 'working copy' if you can), a good program will let you use datafiles (alone or in sequence) up to the capacity of the disk on which they are stored, so the emptier that disk is at the outset, the better. As datafiles are amended, a good program will automatically keep a back-up copy in case of accidents. The disadvantage is that the storage space on the disk is halved in the interests of safety. You may also find that some temporary 'working' files are created by the program too, further reducing the space on the disk. On a one-drive system that can make operation very slow, unless the whole program and its working files can be loaded into memory and manipulated there. Incidentally, although I use the word disk throughout this article, it is quite possible to use database programs on tape-based computers. However it is much slower, to the point where I really cannot recommend tape use.

The 'cards' are called 'records' and it will help later if a standard format for the information is adopted from the start, both in terms of number of lines, or 'fields' as they are known, and how long each line can be. E.g., the first line might be someone's name as you know them, 'Edna' for example, the second might be their phone number, the next few lines might cover name and address details as on an envelope, starting with 'Mrs E Bygum' and continuing with 'Blackpit Cottage', 'High Road', 'Carshalton', 'Surrey', 'CA6 9OR', and so on.

THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS AND PERILS

This may seem like easy stuff so far, much covered before in the computer press, but we have already come across a couple of potential snags. This is largely because it is the case with most 8-bit computers' databases that they are quite particular about how they let you store your information, and can be quite unforgiving if you decide to change your mind later by finding a need for additional, or larger, fields.

Say you are setting up a database of the close relations on your family tree, including details of where they lived, spouses etc. Before long you will be proving that not all entries take up the same space. Whereas you may know that your father, John Evan Smith, married your mother, née Ann Freda Brown, his mother's name may be found to be The Hon. Constance Elizabeth Demelza Bowe-Legge, and your mother's mother's name may turn out to be Hephzibah Rachael Baumgarten. You'll have a job fitting *them* into the 20 character space you allowed for in the 'name' field, based on your parents' much shorter names.

Another problem arises if you find dad was three times married (one died, one left to farm in Australia, and the last - bigamous - survived him and later married the milkman). These extremely silly examples only go to make the case for either getting a flexible program which will let you change the number and size of fields and records, or planning well ahead and including twice as many fields as you think you will need with at least 50% more characters possible in each field than you anticipate needing. This may appear over-cautious, but better to be safe than sorry.

As an example to consider as the basis for a template for your database, here are the figures derived from the details of 8BIT subscribers, including the number of characters and spaces, in each field:

EXAMPLE ENTRY	FIELDNAME	MAXIMUM NO OF CHARACTERS
Mr BA Watson	NAME	17
Brian	DEAR...	15
x-iHarrowdenx-i	HOUSENAME	30
39 High Street	STREET	29
\$	STREET2	20
Sutton-in-the-Isle	VILLAGE	20
ELY	POSTTOWN	20
Cambridgeshire	COUNTY	14
CB6 2RA	POSTCODE	8
01353 777006/777471	PHONE/FAX	20
%1-%16%17	SUBSDetails	30
\$	NOTES1	40
\$	NOTES2	40
17	LASTISSUE	3

In **Protect**, the database program I use, a single '\$' sign in a field denotes one without any valid information, in other words it is deemed empty. Other programs handle this in their own ways. In fact, my

database is almost infinitely flexible (I heard from someone who wondered why he appeared to get occasional calculation errors manipulating numbers in over 300 fields including mathematical calculations), but as a straw poll on about 750 records, I feel I can suggest the figures above as being workable for simple "club records" or other basic 'name and address' purposes.

A good program will also allow you to insert control codes of some sort to affect the look of your text. I live at a house called Harrowden and I have italicised it in the record. A good program will let you do this or change the font in another way, whereas you may have to use quotes to emphasise text in a less flexible program. You may be able to store numbers in fields and perform calculations on them. But that is getting into the area of more active uses of database's information which will be covered in more detail later.

GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

Right, that's some of the potentially limiting aspects of database programs out of the way, as well as some incentives to be a little adventurous in your choice of programs. I say programs because, in the long run, you will be lucky if you find just one program that suits all your needs. However, I have found it important to use as a main program one which is capable of going at least *a little* beyond the immediate perceived needs so that you can experiment without being frustrated at once by the program's limitations.

Having mentioned already some of the possible difficulties, there are some techniques which may get around them. For example, a good database will include at least some kind of 'export' and 'import' facilities. At its most basic, this will be best achieved working with ASCII (pure text only) files. You may find that either the datafile itself or the ASCII file exported from the database has an obvious visible structure if viewed from a word processor. One which is quite common is 'comma separated variables' or 'CSV format'. This means that information in the fields will be separated by commas, with ',' for an empty field. Also, datafiles generally contain special control codes to mark the beginnings and ends of records and fields. Adding new information in the same format, including blank fields remember, is the most likely way to be successful in working around a fixed file format. There is nothing to stop you trying to load an 'exported' datafile into a word processor, editing it in some way, then 'importing' it back into the database after the format has been changed too. If you *can* do it this can get you around difficulties of outgrowing your format.

USING THE DATABASE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Although a 'names and address list' is the usually quoted example, databases can be used to record virtually anything. A collection of stamps, coins or music are obvious alternatives, but I have found it is helpful when writing plays to record 'life details' of characters into a database, just like a real genealogical record but with more personality and motivational notes than family history researchers usually keep in their files.

Years ago, in the early days of the BBC computers, a friend of mine built up a 'fault diagnosis and repair' database based on experiences with his car, recording such things as fault symptoms and references to books and articles which solved the problems. It occurred to me that if a car generated enough problems to *need* a computer to record the details, it probably wouldn't keep going long enough to reap the benefits. I was right; the BBC outlived the car, but my friend's database was modified to apply to later examples of his 'marginal motoring' experiments.

So far I have only really considered the database as a fairly inert thing, as it might be using paper or real record cards. The *computer* database really starts to score over its printed counterpart in a big way once you start modifying or reading from it. Keys are quicker than **Tipp-ex**, but there is more to it than that.

The simplest manipulation is a 'sort' of some kind. For example, you may wish to list to the screen, the printer, or another file some details of all the CD albums in your collection with the word 'jazz' in one or more of the track titles, but *not* the details of others which do not. In such a simple case, the program itself will probably have some facilities for finding the required parameter(s) in the datafile and acting only on the information you have defined. Once the information has been 'sorted' it may be saved as a file in the amended form, but under a different name if you wish to avoid losing the original.

The basic file-handling controls may be defined as 'included?' or 'excluded?' searches. These may be made more sophisticated, perhaps specifying the range by 'larger than' or 'smaller than' in terms of the number of characters or an actual measurement of an item in a field. This is the way that I choose which letters and labels will be printed for distributing issues of **8BIT** only to 'paid-up' subscribers. Using the case above, I have asked the program to *only* print letters then labels for those addresses with '%16' in the SUBSDETAILS field to send out this issue.

Some databases will work with programs. Generally, those from the same publisher can be relied upon to mesh well, with a word processor being the obvious example. However it can be very revealing to read magazine reviews of 'third party' database programs and find that in many cases they were written to *improve upon* a publisher's own 'add-on' to its word processor. A specialist database, such as one designed for genealogy, may have more features, and be more flexible in ways of structuring its printed output, than a general program, which may only be able to handle a 'label' type of format, or something just about as simple.

The uses of mail-merge programs, which work as active connections between a datafile and a word processor, are outside the scope of this article, but clubs or advertisements in computer magazines can be valuable sources of useful information and templates. Those publishers who are still in business will often offer disks of useful routines, either free or at low cost. At their best, mail-merge programs can incorporate a virtual programming language for using information from one or more datafiles in ways which can border on those of a spreadsheet or business program, generating delivery notes, invoices, statements and 'account overdue' letters, and keeping sophisticated records to be the basis of reports for VAT or the bank manager.

Many years ago, I obtained an 'ideas organiser' program free from a magazine covertape. I have since transferred it to disk and used it as the basis of a series of multi-choice adventure games as well as a complex flow chart of my multifaceted working week. I am definitely *not* a capable programmer, so if I can blunder through and come up with several practical applications you should be able to as well.

Once you have grasped the basic concepts of databases, you can look out for one that might be suitable, possibly in slightly modified form, for a particular job you have been meaning to do for ages. There is a good case for some enjoyable research here at quite reasonable cost. Many programs are still supplied and supported to a greater or lesser extent so write to publishers (via a mail-order company, if necessary) for an information pack (enclose an A4 SAE to maximise the possibility of a worthwhile response). Buying database-type programs cheaply second-hand 'on spec' can turn up some almost forgotten gems too.

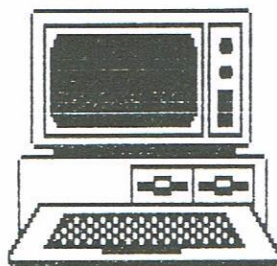
In the PcW16 pages of this issue I describe some alternative ways to use the new **Home Inventory** program. Others may like to report on odd ways of using another database for **8BIT** readers.

I hope this article has fired your enthusiasm for databases. They really are a potentially very useful and fascinating area of computer use, and well within the capabilities of 8-bit computers and their users.

Brian Watson

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Not a hoax, not an April Fool.
8BIT will close after number 25.

Because of a major business project which I expect to have up and running by then (and which, incidentally, may be of interest to many of 8BIT's readers), I have taken the decision to set a closing date for this magazine. Also I would expect 8BIT to have addressed all the subjects worth covering at least once by then, and I would prefer to close with people wanting more, rather than risk going stale and becoming boring. Stale I could probably just about live with, but not boring.

There will always be a degree of uncertainty associated with the 'small press' publications for their subscribers, but I hope this clear announcement well in advance will reassure readers that 8BIT will continue to be run in a (fairly) professional way for the whole of its life.

It will definitely *not* just fade away through a series of declining issues with superficial editorial and a decreasing numbers of pages, like some past magazines I am sure we could all name.

8BIT is not up for sale, nor is its subscription list available, free or for payment. Throughout its run I have given that assurance to subscribers and I'm not changing it now. I would hope that anyone who is planning to step in to fill the gap with a similar type of publication will have sufficient creativity to choose another title rather than just tag onto 8BIT's tail. I will be very pleased to publicise all such endeavours and help wherever possible, if requested.

If someone does decide to pick up the idea, it will be interesting to see what frequency of publication they opt for. One of the few things I have ever received letters of mild

criticism over so far have been my decisions to go bi-monthly from monthly after the first couple of issues, and later to a quarterly schedule. I took comfort from the fact that, with one exception, none of the critics felt able to attempt anything on a remotely similar scale.

Because of the newly changed circumstances, the policy of *not* including loose sheet advertising fliers is cancelled from here on as I believe a number of groups would like to use that means of promoting their services. Rates are available upon request. I must also recommend the 'display advertisement' option as I know it produces a very good response rate and many readers do not like loose sheets dropping out of their magazine. That is *exactly* why I now bind in the advertising pages of 8BIT.

There will be no cutting down on 8BIT's page content and I expect to give full value to the end of the run. Among the topics already at an advanced stage of planning are a writers' special (next issue) on how to *really* increase the prospects of getting your work into print *and get paid for it*, and a feature on spreadsheets (possibly in issue 18).

This latter one will seek to make 'number-crunching' interesting and relevant to everyday purposes and will continue one of the intended principles of the magazine; that of making formerly obscure computer-related subjects a little clearer and worth pursuing through *your* computer's own software, clubs and publications.

I also have a games issue in mind which will approach the subject in a way which should appeal both to the intellectual and the zapper. Perhaps they are not so different?

On the subject of games, 8BIT has strangely not yet published an "I've got a ..., now what can I do with it?" feature on that king of the 8-bit games computers, the Spectrum. That oversight needs remedying too.

The Spectrum is often seen as *just* a games computer by people who don't have one. Anyone who *does* have one knows that it is capable of much more than that. Then there's the Osborne, the Sharps, the Einstein...

As to the rest, I am wide open to suggestions. If there is something, *anything*, which relates to 8-bit computer use and you feel has not been covered, or covered *adequately*, elsewhere, I shall try to get the job done before 8BIT closes. You will find a suggestion request slip attached to the bottom of the letter sent with this issue.

If I keep to 8BIT's present schedule, the last one will be published at the beginning of July 1999. Actually, I will issue a couple of additional 'specials' to fulfil the quota but bring the finishing date closer.

At least one of them will be another 'no adverts' special to ease my conscience over the number of unpublished articles from readers I still have in the files. If I get them typed up this month there may be a copy sent before the next scheduled one. In any event, it should be all over by the Millennium.

If you have subscribed to issues beyond number 25 you will find a cheque refund enclosed with this issue and in future subscriptions will only be accepted up to number 25. If 17-25 are paid for together the price will be £18 (£2) each, for orders less than that the price remains at £3 each.

For now, small quantities of all the back issues of 8BIT are still available at a cost of £3 each, unless they are ordered with future to make 10 or more, in which case the price drops to just £2 per copy.

There will be *no more* reprints done so 'first come, first served' until they're all gone. How's that for manufacturing a collector's market demand? An index of past contents is available for an SAE.

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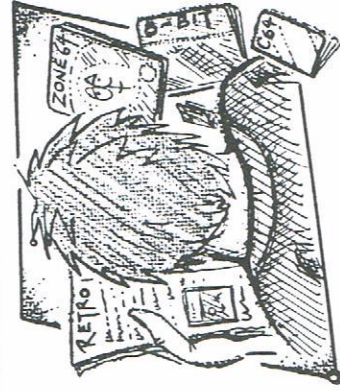
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APOLOGY

In the last issue I wrongly suggested that **Alchemist Software** was run by Andy Davis. Sorry, all. While Andy founded it, and still runs **Alchemist Research**, **Alchemist Software** is now in the hands of Lloyd Garland and Trevor Mossman from 126, Hayward Road, Redfield, BRISTOL BS5 9QA.

While I'm on the subject, it seems from assurances received from both parties referred to that neither I nor **8BIT** are being investigated at the moment by any official bodies (ASA, DTI, DPR, PCC, OFT, TSD, BBC, ITN) so it must have been a misunderstanding on someone's part, mustn't it? Let us assume so.

LOKI HERE

There's a fascinating peek at what might have been in February's **Format** magazine. David Thomas has written an extremely detailed and comprehensive article on Clive Sinclair's proposed SuperSpectrum (codenamed **LOKI**) which was dropped when Amstrad took over.

Many of the features implemented in the SAM four years later were to have been part of the specification and the performance was aimed at Amiga quality, but with a price tag of under £200. See **Format**'s advert elsewhere if you would like to read the whole story.

'16 NOTCHES UP 10

Dixon's have now bought a total of 10,000 PcW16s. Their initial purchase before Christmas has sold through well enough for an increased reorder to be placed.

The company took £30 off the usual retail price of £299 as part of their usual post-Christmas sale but it's back up now and apparently the '16 is now outselling all similar word processing bundles by "quite a large margin" said a company spokesman.

The big demand is now for 'third party' software. Although Betacom and Amstrad Direct themselves seem rather in the dark as to what is going happening on the software front, see the PcW16 pages of this issue for more on news on the first release, **Inventory Master**.

At the moment, resolving some difficulties in the printing routines is holding things up and he obviously doesn't want to put out a program which is known to be bugged. Some companies would (and have); he won't.

I can also report that Richard Fairhurst **RoutePlanner** is probably next. It will cost £24.99 and be released by the end of May (he hopes).

Both of these early releases are pioneering software on a very new operating system, so a little more understanding and a little less carping about the lateness of both of the releases would be very much appreciated, I am sure.

CP/M-THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

Some other magazines are still fighting shy of openly saying that CP/M may now be freely distributed. It *is* so; Caldera, the present owners of it, have said so (see **8BITS** passim for full details).

And for PC users with a nagging longing for NSWP.COM and about 20,000 other CP/M programs, I recommend the **Walnut Creek CD**, obtainable from 1547, Palos Verdes, Suite 260, Walnut Creek, CA 94596, USA for \$49.95 including airmail carriage.

This news came from Richard Wildey and others, but I see that the February **Format** has an article on it too.

Sorry to drone on about it, but that February **Format** also has an address for Z88 support: Rakewell Ltd, 24, Putnams Drive, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5HH. Tel: 01296 630617, fax: 01296

632491. Now if you want to read more, you'll just have to buy one yourself.

IT'S A CRACKER

There's a new game just released for the CPC. Martin Bela's **The Bomb Room** uses Incentive Software's **Freescape 2** system (as available for other computers) to create a virtual reality 'solid' 3D landscape to move around in, until you find the room which contains the bomb which you must de-fuse, or it's "bye, bye, buster!" For further details, see the small ads this issue.

TASNEWS

Thanks to Lloyd Garland for the news that Tasman Software are still in business. I must say I thought they had sunk years ago, but they are obviously still in the land of the living. That must make them one of the longest lived publishers for 8-bit computers, I think.

The company are probably best known for being the publishers of word processing software such as **Tasword**, **Tas-Spell**, **Tas-Sign** etc for most of the 8-bit computers.

THAT WHICH IS, AND THAT WHICH IS NOT

What *is* true is that on the night of Monday the 24th February 1997, a giant warehouse on the edge of Peterborough which belongs to the electrical retailers **Curry's** was 'ram-raided' and a large quantity of TVs, computers, hi-fi equipment, and microwave cookers was stolen. What *is not* true is that the thieves were arrested when they tried to return the PcW16s the next day.

DON'T MAKE A SPECTACLE OF YOURSELF

If you have a branch of the 'while you wait glasses' company **Vision Express** nearby you may like to take advantage of a new service they are offering. For a flat fee of £45 (plus VAT) the company's shops can now use their in-store lens

Continued on Page 17

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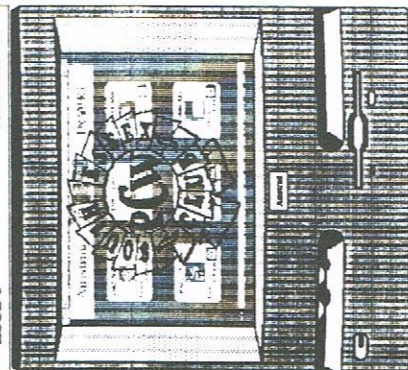
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THE DISC DRIVE

ISSUE 8 AUTUMN 95



The magazine dedicated to the Amstrad PCW

CrossWord Maker

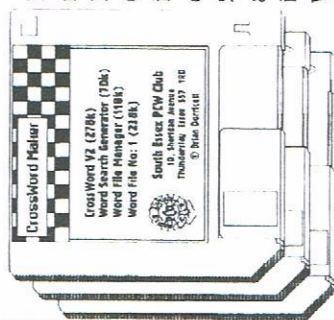
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CLUB ENQUIRIES TO: Keith Simons, 10 Ormishmere Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire.
SK8 5HP.

Changing tabs and margins on my old manual typewriter was easy. I simply lifted and moved the pegs at the back of the carriage. Such are the benefits of computing that adjusting a margin no longer covers your hands in oil!

For a one-off change to affect the whole document:

This will be the most common use. If you want these changes to alter every document, you must alter your relevant Template.

In Locoscript 1, to change the basic layout for the document:

- A1. Press [f7][enter][f7][enter][f1] then press the down arrow.
- A2. Press the right and left arrows to move the small cursor across the line, then press f1 where you wish to set the left margin, f2 for right margin, f3 for normal tabulators, f6 for decimal tabulator (aligned at decimal tab - e.g. for invoices). Press [-] to remove tabs.
- A3. Press [exit][exit][enter][exit][enter] to return to your document.

In Locoscript 2 or 3 (or 4), the operation is slightly simpler.

- B1. Press [f2] select change layout press [enter].
- B2. Use left and right arrow keys to move small cursor across line 4 of the screen.
- B3. To set a margin, press f1, select which margin, press [enter]. Similarly to set or remove a tab, press f3 to select.
- B4. Press [exit] to return to your document.

For a change which will only affect part of the document.

E.g. The signature part of a Will is set out with different margins to the main text of the Will. The instructions below will alter the part of the document starting with the line below the one where the layout code is.

In Locoscript 1 you have (usually) 6 layouts which you can call upon. Type [+]LT3[enter] (replace "3" with any number from 1-6) then edit the layout by pressing [f2] select edit current layout, press [enter]. Follow the instructions in A2 above to alter margins and tabs, then press [exit] to return to your document.

In Locoscript 2 or 3, follow instructions B1 to B4 above, but select "new layout" (not "change layout") at the start.

For the facility to make regular changes throughout your document.

E.g. layouts for bills of costs. Practice the above operations before you attempt this, as it is rather complex.

In Locoscript 1, you would press [f2], select Edit layout... layout (type in number and press enter). Follow the instructions in A2 above, then press [exit]. Set up each layout in turn in this way. When you wish to insert the layout, press [+]LT3[enter] (replace "3" with the appropriate number).

In Locoscript 2 or 3:

- D1. Press f1, select Document Setup (enter).
- D2. Press f2, select Change Stock Layouts (enter). From the menu which appears, select the layout you wish to work on. Edit as in B2 and B3 above, then press [exit].
- D3. When finished, press [exit][enter][exit][enter].

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MUMPITZ is a monthly mag and gratis (a kind of *paper shareware* - international reply coupons are welcome). For a test copy write to

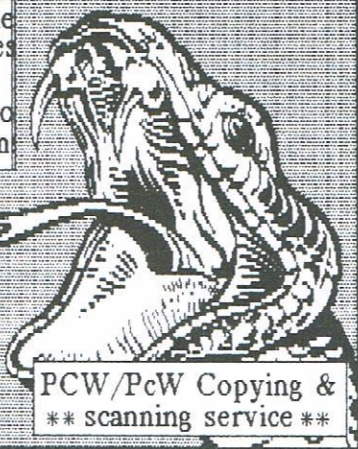
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THE PcW16 PAGES by Brian Watson

Now the PcW16 is on sale, **8BIT** magazine is receiving enquiries on whether software exists for it. Ever eager to oblige, here is the first detailed coverage of the first release, **Inventory Master**, written by Richard Wildey and published by **ComSoft** in GLASGOW at a price of £24.99. The program was mentioned briefly in issue 15 of **8BIT** as a 'Program in Preparation' and, at the time of writing, it still is. What is being described is still a (just) pre-release version which I have had through various developmental stages for debugging. It is now very 'stable and, as its release is now "imminent", more in-depth coverage seems due.

Inventory Master is a very original concept as a program and I have never seen anything similar. It is designed to be what its name suggests; a program for cataloguing your domestic possessions for any of a variety of purposes. Quoted examples include for insurance, making a will, being a valuable reference in the event of a major disaster, listing items in rented accommodation, and many others. It has been created by Richard Wildey, a very capable programmer with many years, and considerable experience, on 8-bit systems. As **Inventory Master** has very much the 'look and feel' of the PcW16's own system programs, It will be easy for the new user to get started without the fear that one wrong move will lose all the data. However, the usual advice to 'save and continue' frequently still applies, of course, as basic good computer practice.

As to its program type, it is a database (in a general sense) but it presents its information in a graphical way. The entered text is arranged within three windows on the screen. Action icons are along the top, and keywords are along the top and bottom, of the screen. Movement *around* the screen and between the various parts of the program is easiest using the mouse, but information is normally entered as real words and numbers with the keyboard. If you are wondering whether you get, or need, a map of the house, the answer is "no" to both questions. Thinking about it, a map would be hungry for memory and take ages to draw, in all probability. No, **Inventory Master** treats *the screen* as the whole housefull of belongings, but allows you to sub-divide it into smaller sub-groups, firstly and optionally, depending on which of three insurance policies they will covered by, then down into locations pre-named as the various rooms of a typical house. They can be altered to suit your purposes in case your mansion does not match the supplied distribution. As provision in all parts is more than adequate for most people I shall not dwell on the statistics of each but you can have up to 60 rooms, as an example of the scale of the thing.

The next sub-division, once you get down to 'room' size, is your list of actual items. To do the job of gathering the information for this chore of 'inputting' effectively you will need a notepad computer or a clipboard, pad, pencil and eraser, unless you are going to get a power pack alternator and lug the '16 around the house with you. Actually, in theory you *could* take the '16 around and plug it in each room in turn but in this case I think old technology is the answer; take up thy clipboard and walk!

The 'recording and entering' phase is one of the most grindingly boring jobs I have ever undertaken. It seemed to take forever, even though I broke it down into room-sized chunks, with day long breaks in-between to retain my sanity, such as it is. You are invited to enter all the contents of each room with the original, replacement, and resale prices (you *do* keep receipts?), as well as other supplementary information. Again, there is enough space for sufficient characters in each box to do it properly, so unfortunately you have no excuse for skipping detailed recording.

Now I've finished it I feel really virtuous. I have a (fairly) accurate record on disc of my worth, as expressed by my domestic possessions, which will satisfy both my insurers and my heirs. And now it's done, **Inventory Master** lets me sort the items in various ways, move them about from room to room (will I ever use that?), and print report summaries to screen or paper.

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For a FREE sample copy of the club magazine send a 31p stamp to:

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There is a comprehensive 28 page A5 manual supplied with the program which includes example screen-shots as well as concise but comprehensive text. Without a doubt this illustrated text approach is better than just a rather dry text only presentation. I am as much an ordinary user as anyone and have found the manual and program very easy to come to use effectively. It also inspired me to other uses (see below).

One nice touch is that **Inventory Master** can be run from the '16's memory, also known as the cabinet. In practice, I did not use this option, but it should speed up the sorting options a bit. I must say they did not strike me as slow. If you are concerned that the 'three insurance policies' option is not sufficient for you, there is no problem in creating and using multiple working copies to cope with your 'two motor, one motorcycle, and one C5' policies, as well as your specialist 'fridge and freezer' policy, etc, etc ...

As I've already said, while working well 'straight from the box', the programme can easily be set up to match the room distribution of your house. And, taking that idea even further, **Inventory Master** can also be used to produce a catalogue of almost *anything* around the home. For example, a book collection could be catalogued 'shelf by shelf' rather than staying with the 'room by room' descriptions, and a CD or tape collection might be catalogued by recording formats (78s, 45s, 33s, C90s, C60s, CD albums, and so on), with style or artist type. Once some have been sold, **8BIT** may run a tutorial on **Inventory Master** to complement the manual if there is sufficient demand. I might even ask Richard Wildey to write it.

Inventory Master will be available through **ComSoft**, 10, McIntosh Court, Wellpark, GLASGOW G31 2HW (cheques payable to **ComSoft**). Credit card orders may be placed on 0141 554 4735.

Oh, and just an afterthought; against the possibility of domestic disaster, the manual strongly suggests you keep a recent backup of your information disc in a safe place outside the home. That's pretty good advice to *every* computer user; we always assume major tragedies will only happen to someone else, whereas I've had a couple already and I reckon another one's about due. An 8-bit computer is now fairly cheap and easy to replace (relatively speaking and especially if covered by insurance), but many programs are getting harder to find, and your actual work disks are the most irreplaceable part of the whole set-up. In these circumstances it must make sense to periodically update a backup set which are kept outside your home. Will you? Of course not. You'd obviously rather re-enter all that data from scratch.

And *do* make sure your PcW16 is included in your insurance policy, won't you? There was very sensible advice recently in the **South Essex PCW Club's** magazine **The Disc Drive**, which reminded readers that, in order to get the police to take you seriously in the event of a burglary requiring you to make an insurance claim, the 'Boys in Blue' expect you to have the serial numbers available for all electrical devices (computers included, of course) if they are going to supply you with their documentation to support your claim. **Inventory Master** can record this, of course, as long as you take the trouble to read in the numbers. And while you are doing the rounds, you might as well security mark everything too with one of those special marker pens, especially the items which do *not* carry their own serial numbers.

8BIT PcW16 Services

In the interests of providing on-going low-cost PcW16 support, **8BIT** is compiling a disc of templates and tips to be used with the word processor and spreadsheet. One file growing daily contains additional words for the spell checker as the original contains some real howlers. It is hoped to include demonstration versions of software, ideally slightly in advance of release. The disk is available now and costs only £1, to just cover the price of the disk, postage and appropriately packaging. All contributions of templates from PcW16 users, 'third-party' software and its authors will be welcomed and acknowledged on the disk.

IEBA

The Independent Eight Bit Association

The Independent Eight Bit Association, formerly solely a SAM and Spectrum group, now works to support and promote the use of *all* 8-bit computers, including the Amstrad CPCs, all PCW/PcWs, NC100/200 notepads, BBCs, Commodore C64/128s, Einsteins, Oric, SAMs, Sharps, Spectrums etc... If it has an eight-bit processor, it is supported by the IEBA.

- * The IEBA has already produced a very comprehensive **Directory of 8-bit Services**, a copy of which is free to members upon joining.
- * When the IEBA has something to discuss among the membership, it publishes and distributes a free newsletter.
- * The group's officers use a wide range of computer types themselves.
- * The IEBA is seeking to set up a portable display module for use in libraries/exhibitions.

Membership of the IEBA costs just £5. There is no annual subscription, and no renewal fee. For further details and a membership application form, write to the Membership Secretary, Brian Watson, at Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

Pipeline Software Tutorials

The Pipeline Software Tutorials, written for CPC computers and acting as a professional quality series of introductory guides to programming, are now available again exclusively from Brian Watson under licence from Sentinel Software. The copyright remains with the author of all parts of the series, Robin Gilbert.

● Pipeline Tutorials have long been respected as the definitive and comprehensive series for CPC users who wish to take their computer use beyond 'off the shelf' programs and into BASIC, assembler, and other programming techniques. All are printed on A4 paper with card covers and comb-bound to lie flat in use.

● Each Pipeline Tutorial costs £5, including the postage and packing, in the United Kingdom. Orders from outside the UK should include £3 extra per order towards postage and secure packaging, regardless of the quantity of Tutorials being ordered.

● There are associated disc files available for some Tutorials. When the series was first issued these files cost extra; now they are supplied free onto the purchaser's own discs.

● A catalogue of the Pipeline Tutorials series may be obtained in return for a stamped, addressed, A4 envelope to Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

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RoutePlanner - 6128 Only - £14.95

The first navigation program for any 8-bit computer. RoutePlanner finds the best route between any two towns - quickly, easily and effectively. RoutePlanner includes a massive 3000 place database and version 1.21 has faster calculation speed and new 1997 data including all motorways and A-roads on the British mainland. An on-screen map, which can be viewed up to 16 times zoom level, displays roads and towns. RoutePlanner's coder, Richard Fairhurst, was Amstrad Action's technical guru and is now Fair Comment (letters) editor for the magazine and user group WACCI.

"RoutePlanner is a mighty ambitious piece of software...it's a pretty darned impressive piece of work...88%" AA 108

MegaBlasters - £10.99 on 3" disc - £9.99 on 3.5" disc

Arguably the biggest game ever produced for the CPC. This action packed bombing game originally spanned 30 discs and has now been crunched down to spread over just two. It blasted on to the CPC with over 900k of data. You can play against another player in all manner of weird and wonderful worlds, work together or have a match with up to four players.

"Whether you are playing along to beat the game creators best scores, or dodging the bombs planted by so-called friends, MegaBlasters is addictiveness taken to a new high - gets it's claws in straight away, whichever way you choose to play...94%" AA 111

Who Said That - 6128 Only - £13.95

Designed for somebody who doesn't want to bash the brains out of cute little teddy bears all the time. A well researched game in which you must answer to the quote. Loads of variety and great humour.
"...It's extremely addictive...really blow your mind, well researched and worth the money. 85%" AA 110

Masters Of Space - £9.95

Great graphics, smooth animation and high speed action in this space game. You are the pilot on board a hi-tech space ship and have to destroy all manner of nasty baddies.
"...Masters of Space delivers the goods...providing high speed action and a few intriguing twists on the usual vertically scrolling shoot-em-up formula...75%" AA 107

Star Driver - £9.95

A colourful game by the same author of Masters Of Space. You race around asteroids in outer space. You can play against the clock, the computer or another opponent in many different worlds.
"The graphics are weird, certainly different and generally quite impressive." - AA 109

grinding technology to optically correct the screens of televisions and computer monitors.

The idea proposed by the company in recent press advertisements is that any distortion of the viewed image, normally caused by the optical inaccuracies of makers' normal manufacturing tolerances, can result in eye strain and headaches.

All that is required is that you turn up at a **Vision Express** branch with your TV or monitor, which is then left with them for a couple of hours for correction. Apparently, the case is removed and the shop works on the bare cathode ray tube to ensure the finished image will be optically correct right to the edges of the screen.

One less useful option (it seems to **8BIT**) is that of matching a screen to a customer's glasses prescription. While the £15 (plus VAT) extra for this additional refinement to the service (*including* the price of an eye test) is a fair enough price, the resulting screen would probably not then be nearly so generally saleable as a second-hand item later after adapting it to the eyes of the principal user.

This is not so much of a problem in the case of a separately bought monitor, or a television being used as a monitor, as the computer itself and other dedicated accessories could be sold separately and the customised monitor retained for connection to the old user's new computer.

However, the service would seem to be a bit hopeless when applied to users of a dedicated monitor as supplied as 'part of the set' with the CPCs' and PCWs' keyboards, as any alteration of the screen outside the 'reading glasses' range renders the complete computer system virtually useless to any potential new user who would be obliged to buy a new monitor on its own - already not an easy task.

Further details of the service may be obtained by sending a SAE to **Vision Express's** Screen Re-Grinding Services Enquiry Desk, which is at 77, Rushleydale, Springfield, CHELMSFORD, Essex CM1 6JX.

Apparently the new service is expected to appeal in particular to PC and Mac users who cannot spot a seasonal hoax when they read one.

THE MILLENNIUM COMPUTER

The rights to apply the name **Millennium** to a computer have been sold. **8BIT** readers who have been following this saga for several issues will know that your editor registered the name before it became fashionable with the intention of launching a new 8-bit computer in 1999, or thereabouts.

Since then, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken into the viability of such a project, and negotiations and other conversations have been held with some of the parties who might have been partners or participants in one way or another.

The main conclusion arrived at in January suggests that, while there will be *always* be a market for a good reliable beginner's computer with some basic bundled software that has compatibility with other computers, the costs of development investment (in terms of programmers' time) cannot be assured to produce an acceptable product within the time required to capitalise on the **Millennium** name.

The general incompetence of the high street retailers in handling the PcW16 ("unfortunately it doesn't support a printer", was one amazing comment recently made by a store *manager*, apparently) was quite predictable, therefore anticipated, and never a factor in the decisions whether or not to proceed with the project.

The intention was *always* to go 'off street' with the sales; into the Innovations-type catalogues, and

direct by mail-order through the Sunday papers, Private Eye, the Supermarket magazines, Evergreen, the County monthlies, and similar publications.

As well as avoiding having to cope with retailer's ignorance and daft ill-informed pro-PC prejudice, this would result in the additional benefit of better producing better profit margins, even allowing for the higher advertising expenditure, and at least it would be targeted towards the most likely customers.

As far as the future of 8-bit computing is concerned, it makes no difference one way or the other; there will be an over-availability of good reliable hardware, software, spares and other support for the existing models well into the next millennium as old users move on.

Also, as the PcW16 has proved, *any* new machine would not *generally* appeal to those with a reasonable financial (and partisan) commitment to an existing machine and its software. That is simply not where the market ever lies for a new one.

Regrettably, part of the contract terms of the sale of the **Millennium** name are that the buyer of it cannot be disclosed until the computer is announced by the company concerned. So when you *do* finally see the name appear on a computer, at least *then* you'll know where the story ends.

Unless, of course, you pay to look it up in the Official Register. Oops.

IT'S A CRACKER

There's a new game just released for the CPC. Martin Bela's *The Bomb Room* uses Incentive Software's *Freescape 2* system (as available for other computers) to create a virtual reality 'solid' 3D landscape to move around in, until you find the room which contains the bomb which you must de-fuse, or it's "bye, bye, buster!" For further details, see the small ads this issue.

Continued on Page 19

Pipeline Software Tutorials Rescued and Reissued

The **Pipeline Software Tutorials** were published some years ago for the Amstrad CPC series of computers. They also act as a series of introductory guides to computer programming generally. The range comprises a very comprehensive series of assembly language and BASIC tutorials and a series of CPC Firmware Guides. Under an licence agreement with the previous distributors, **Sentinel Software**, they are now available exclusively from Brian Watson. Copyright remains with Robin Gilbert, user support is available from Richard Wildey (author of **Inventory Master**), and the CPC club **WACCI** will be running a series referring to the tutorials.

All the **Tutorials** have been substantially re-edited and re-compiled and are now printed on A4 paper with acetate and card covers and are 'comb-bound' to lie flat in use as several of the previous users of the series had requested this. It is more expensive, but felt to be worthwhile to make the range even more attractive.

This is a *very* significant rescue and reissue. **Pipeline Tutorials** have long been respected as *the* definitive series for CPC users who wish to take their computer use beyond running 'off the shelf' programs and into BASIC and other techniques of programming. There are associated disc files available for some of the tutorials. When the series was first issued these files cost extra; now they are supplied *free* onto the purchaser's own discs.

Each **Pipeline Tutorial** costs £5, including postage in the UK. Orders from *outside* the UK should include £3 extra per order, regardless of the quantity ordered. A full catalogue of the **Pipeline Tutorials** series and other software and support for CPC & PCW users may be obtained from the publisher, Brian Watson, *Harrowden*, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA in return for a stamped, addressed, A4 envelope.

OTTO

Issue 3 - now incorporating **AFTER DARK!**

For more information,
send an SAE or 3" disc to:

**Nicholas Campbell,
24 Ballyminstragh Rd.,
Killinchy, Newtownards,
Co. Down, Northern Ireland,
BT23 6RE.**

Remember - OTTO costs you nothing at all! Issues 1 and 2 available on 3" disc - please state when ordering. Issue 3 expected by late August 1996.



Bonzo's Scrapyard

*The occasional newsletter for Amstrad CPC
tape to disc transfers*

29 Chapter Road, Strood, Rochester,
Kent, ME2 3PX

Bonzo's Scrapyard, the tape to disc transfer information newsletter, using the Bonzo suite of programs, published quarterly, is available now from the above address. To receive a copy, send an A5 or A4 sized SAE, plus an additional first class stamp.

The Bonzo programs are now on sale again

The following Bonzo related programs, which between them transfer over 1400 programs from tape to disc, are available exclusively from Bonzo's Scrapyard:

- 1 Bonzo Super Meddler and Hackpack
- 2 Bonzo Blitz (for Speedlock programs) and 4 adventure games written by Colin Harris
- 3 Bonzo's Flashpack (Flash Basic Utilities and Demos)
- 4 Bonzo's Big Batch (Database, Pools Predictor, Sprite/Screen Designer)
- 5 Maxidos and CPC Procody

All the above are on 3 inch disc and cost £8.50 per disc, including P&P.

Also available is the MS800 big format program, this is supplied on 3.5 inch disc and costs £6.50, including P&P.

All the above programs available from the end of September 1995, please make cheques etc. payable to Mr D. A. Caleno.

'16 NOTCHES UP 10

Dixon's have now bought a total of 10,000 PcW16s. Their initial purchase before Christmas has sold through well enough for an increased reorder to be placed.

The company took £30 off the retail price as part of their usual post-Christmas sale and apparently the '16 is now outselling all similar word processing bundles by "quite a large margin" said a company spokesman.

The big demand is now for 'third party' software. Although Betacom and Amstrad Direct themselves seem rather in the dark as to what is going happening on the software front, see the PcW16 pages of this issue for more on news on the first release, **Inventory Master**.

At the moment, resolving some difficulties in the printing routines is holding things up and he obviously doesn't want to put out a program which is known to be bugged. Some companies would (and have); he won't.

I can also report that Richard Fairhurst **RoutePlanner** is probably next. It will cost £24.99 and be released by the end of May (he hopes).

Both of these early releases are pioneering software on a very new operating system, so a little more understanding and a little less carping about the lateness of both of the releases would be very much appreciated, I am sure.

READY FREDDIES FOR (ALMOST) ALL

A letter from Roy Everett announces that the **FREDDY 312** 720k drive is now available for just £68 including p&p. One version has its own PSU, while another draws from a CPC's CTM644's 12v supply. It can be a CPC6128 drive A or B, or a 464 drive B (only), and a CPC+ version is in preparation, as is one for use

with *any* PCW, and another for the Einstein. The weirdest version (in 720k or 1Mb options) is one to work with laptops via the printer ports; PCs eh? Crazy, ne sont-ils pas?

There are also Spectrum 2A and 3A versions too as ready **FREDDIES** now. Other hardware items are planned, so for orders or further information write to Roy at 2, Coldnailhurst Avenue, BRAINTREE, Essex CM7 2SJ, and say **8BIT** sent you.

ROUND THE CLUB MAGAZINES

By coincidence, two of the magazines sent to **8BIT** this quarter have hit particularly high points.

The Disc Drive, from The South Essex PCW Club, has more pages than before and a de-luxe finish with a photograph on the cover. The usual very good editorial content too, and plenty of it.

BAUD, from the Berks PCW Club, has its best issue yet with the March '97 issue. I particularly liked the question and answer session, which managed to address worthwhile questions without covering those which have been answered many times before.

By incorporating the voice of the member more this time, *especially* in the Q & A section, Baud's Ed Harris has managed to dilute the 'one man-one mag-one voice' effect which can be the bane of any 'small press' publication. The world is composed of do-ers on the one hand and consumers on the other, and I know only too well from other editors and my own experience how hard it can be to obtain the participation of others to a sufficiently high standard to entertain or inform other readers.

Mumpitz has had an outbreak of cheeky pictures in recent issues, allegedly all in the interests of research, as Hans-Christof has been looking at MACs doing jolly things like running emulators, among other things, and it's quite surprising what turns up on PD discs.

The March '97 issue also has a piece headed 'Brians Sound Tool' which I *hope* refers to some sort of musical program. Anything else, and I'll be making further enquiries to find out who talked.

Bonzo's Scrapyard, the specialist magazine covering CPC tape to disc and 'backup' matters has just hit issue 19. It's a bit restricted as a general purpose read but does what it aims to do admirably.

Because his coverage is not topical, I think editor Dave Caleno shouldn't worry so much about being a bit intermittent in his publishing schedule. In fact, if I were him I'd leave the numbers but take the cover date off the magazine completely and stop all grumblers in their tracks!

James Waddington, responsible for **Classix** magazine (£1.20 per copy, payable to 'J Waddington') and his Spectrum, CPC and C64 game finder service, asks me to remind **8BIT** readers that he is now at **Sherwood Lodge**, 15, Drummond Road, Boscombe, BOURNEMOUTH, BH1 4DP (e-mail to; u9600169@bournemouth.ac.uk) due to being into University in a big way. Consider it done, James.

As I paste up this page I have *just* received a copy of **PCW Today**, Adrian Brady's very well presented bid to establish a new national PCW magazine. More next issue.

See elsewhere for all contact details (apart from PCW Today).

EMULATOR WORLD

For *anyone* looking for an emulator (a program to run on a PC and make it behave like another type of computer, even to running the old software by one means or another) Emulator World seem to have a fairly comprehensive list.

Spectrums, SAMs, CPCs, Timex, Z88s, Dragon, Atari, Oric-1, Tandy, BBC, Tape or Disk C64, Apple IIe. Also Gameboys and MACs. Despite the last two, that's still not a bad tally, I think.

The address is 62, Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, SHEFFIELD, S13 7LN, and the phone number is 0114 269 7644.

'ZINE 64 IS BACK

Chris Holgate's C64 diskzine is back after a long gap. By the time you read this, Richard Bowen will have taken over the distribution of 'Zine 64 so send your £2s to him for a Disk copy, or £2.40 for a tape version. The address is 35, Nottingham Road, Nuthall, NOTTINGHAM, NG16 1DN.

Meanwhile, Chris is offering an Internet service to C64 enthusiasts. His address is 45, Wheatlands Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 5HX, or you could try Cholgate@AOL.cam, or <http://members.aol.com/cholgate/zine64/homepage.htm>. I thank you.

WHAT A LIVEWIRE

John Wigzell has set up a service called Livewire to supply various accessories (including 3" discs) for PCW users. However, looking at his lists, I think he's setting his aims too low. There is a lot to interest *all* 8-bit computer users and at very reasonable prices too. Write to John at 22, Offens Drive, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 0LS.

VOICE FROM THE PAST

In early issues, 8BIT carried adverts from Ansible Information, principally publishers of document indexing programs for LocoScript. Then contact was lost, until now.

Well they have recently written to say they have now modified the program to work with LocoScript 4 files. Ansible are now at 94, London Road, READING, Berks RG1 5AU.

MORE MAYHEM

Very late, I am pleased to give a mention at last to Met and M + M/Mayhem, who *seem* to be offering wares for the C64. If my '64 was working I'd boot up the disk supplied and confirm that. Further

clarification and information can be obtained from 12, Arthur Avenue, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 5PQ.

MORE GOOD C64 STUFF

Now I know this lot by their reputation: The prolific Retros Software have sent me a disk of their new C64 games, which are mainly available on tape at £2.99 or disk at £3.99.

They include The Magnificent Six, The Magnificent Six 2 (Not 62?), Chicken, Saliva Kid (disk only); all this new software, it makes you want to spit.

Write (and/or send money) to Matthew Withers, 209, Ruskin Road, CREWE, Cheshire CW2 7JY.

HOT NEWS - BEST SERVED COLD

I can now report, from personal experience, that PCs make a very large crash indeed when thrown out of an office window and on to a hard surface. The process is also the source of a surprising amount of personal satisfaction.

I particularly recommend doing this when *not* in a heightened state of frustration or anger as, under these circumstances, some of the subtler nuances of the cathode ray tube imploding may be missed. The case containing the motherboard and other related components is quite resilient but some colourful spillage is still likely, depending on the height of the drop.

The keyboard's plastic case is quite elastic and seems to have been designed to resist impact. Therefore it may have to be projected with a certain amount of force to achieve a proper display of the various forces of chaos in action. Normal e-mail service at the 8BIT office will be resumed as soon as possible.

WACCI, OR WHAT

WACCI, the 'largest CPC users' group in the world, are considering

opening up their membership to people without CPCs. I am told, in fact, that they already have done so unofficially, as several owners of other computers (and without having CPCs as well) have already joined for the club magazine's occasional CP/M coverage.

Several "CPC" programs such as **Protext**, **Tasword**, **RoutePlanner**, **MicroDesign** and **Newsweep**, are also (or will be) available in similar versions for other 8-bit computers so coverage of them has relevance to a wider readership.

Also the CPC's standard 3" disc drives are also fitted to later Spectrums and early PCWs so the group keeps a small supply of 3" discs for sale to members.

For a sample copy of **WACCI** (the magazine) send £2 (£3 if outside the UK) to Subscriptions Person Paul Derryhouse at 7, Brunswood Green, Hawarden, Flint CH5 3JA.

WACCI (the group) will be having their annual get-together at the football ground in Walsall on Sunday 6th July from 10am-4pm. Tickets (they come with a map) cost £4 from Angie Hardwick, who lives at 23, Station Place, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 2PH.

Having attended both of the previous ones, I can state that a great time is had by *all*, and a great steak is had by *some*.

TOMORROW'S NEWS

There are rumours rife of very significant hardware developments being underway in the '8-bit world'. 8BIT seeks the facts.

Firstly, a confirmation: Bob Branchley is seeking to gather a team to take the SAM technology to the next level. This *is* true because he says it is in the latest **Format**. It makes sense too, as he is in the best position to estimate the viability of such a development project. Now see the **SHORTS** section for the latest on 'Big Rumour 2'.

SHORTS

RUMOURS, RUMOURS

The second Big Rumour going about in the PCW press at the moment is the one about the 'Super PCW16'. Up to press time, I could find no solid evidence to support this and believe it possible that magazines may be passing the story around, adding a bit each time. Just Chinese whispers, in fact.

The Millennium project was still at the stage of assessing viability when the name was sold, and the PCW16's operating system and programs, as supplied in version 1.04, still leave a lot to be desired in terms of reliability and bug-free working.

This is not to say Amstrad would not go ahead with a 'mark 2' which would utilise many of the additional features which are already there in the present model but not used. Such a possibility *has* definitely been discussed within Amstrad.

What it *is* to say is that Amstrad would be nuts if they didn't finish completely de-bugging the '16 system first, and then make sure that the software developers need not be tied to Creative Technology for the use of their development kits and the allied obligation to enter into an agreement with them for any of the developed software.

The original '16s are selling well, contrary to some expectations, but a lot are being brought back too, and the 8-bits record for reliability (particularly as has been associated formerly with the PCW marque) needs to be restored for credibility in the trade to underpin a new machine.

If there are hard facts available 8BIT would like to hear of them, even if not for publication.

AT THIS PRICE, YOU MIDAS WELL

For many issues 8BIT has carried advertisements for the Midas printer

ribbon and cartridge re-inking service, whose profits go to the Headway charity. At £1.90 for *any* type of ribbon in *any* colour, or £6.75 to refill a Canon BC01/02 cartridge (as against about £20 new) the service is a bargain, as well as being for a good cause.

In a recent letter, Midas' Robin Horsford also sent details of their *new* ribbon prices (also very cheap), their scanning service for PCWs and PCs, as well as some PCW software which they sell - all at reasonable prices. All prices quoted above include postage. Oh, and they take credit cards too.

SOLENT KNIGHT

Yet another PCW supplier and service agent comes to light; they are Solent PCW Services, of 20, Masefield Crescent, WATERLOOVILLE, Hants PO8 8JS (Tel/Fax 01705 268780). Loads of software too, including some items for other 3" users. SAE for lists.

BREAKING FOR SPARES

Now here's a good one I found; MACOB of 406, West Green Road, LONDON N15 3PX (Tel 0181 881 3050, Fax 0181 889 6010) still offer to repair 'older' computers as economically as possible, and break down the uneconomic ones for use as spares.

When I called in, there were about 12 PCWs and several C64/128s in various stages of disarray on the shelves. If you find yourself in the area, park round the corner to allow time to browse (yellow lines).

PCW HELP REQUIRED

Keith Bull would like someone's help to reconfigure his Cyrus 2 chess to work under the Network on his PCW with an ability to 'quit' to the desktop. From his letter this sounds like a job for someone who can doctor the code as the program was not written with the Network in mind. Keith is to be found at 01702 339894 (from 7-9pm).

He has also written a fairly terse letter about the poor service he feels he has had from a repairer in his area. 8BIT has only just written to the alleged miscreant, so has not yet received a reply, but it is hoped we will be able to report more on this in our next issue.

Z88 TO PC?

I have been asked by John P Kelly whether he can link his Z88 to his Pentium 75 running Word for Windows under Windows 95. He wishes to use the Z88 'on the move' then transfer the work to the PC beast. His E-mail address is JPK@diad.pipex.com and his postal address is TBA later.

FOLLOWING LIKE SHEEP DEPT

Spice Girls: there, I'd hate to have the only publication in Britain which failed to mention them this month. And what a shame the former flood of 8-bit games software from the licensing companies has dried up. The opportunities for using these five alleged champions of Girl Power in tacky, overpriced, software are virtually endless.

As well as the 'Red Nose' tie-in game (almost 10p from the price of every game sold will go to ...), how about the following game concepts for the Spectrum, C64 and CPC:

1) **The Spice Girls Image Game:** in which you try to match the blocky face (I've cleaned this one up a bit) of the girly on the screen to the grizzled old record executives' idea of a teenage stereotype.

2) **The Spice Girls Quiz:** in which question one is; we know that, by their manager's own recent admission on LBC radio, they have never really sung on stage (they have only ever mimed), but, for 10 points, have they ever sung on their records?

3) **The Spice Girls History Quiz:** in which question one is; place these over-hyped pop has-beens in date order; David Cassidy, The Monkees, Annette Funicello, Spice Girls, Bros, Sigue Sigue Sputnik, etc, etc.

4) **The Spice Girls Game for a Laugh:** Beadle (for it is he); "You *thought* you were in a world-conquering Girl Band, earning millions of pounds and in total control of your careers and your private lives, but ..."

Now don't tell me, due to memory (and budget) limitations none of the games' graphics are great and the gameplay is even worse but boy, you sure *do* get to waggle that joystick!

Incidentally, after the 'Griff, Jonathan and Lenny get to snog the Spice Girls if the public pledges ten thousand quid' farrago on Comic Relief night, we now know for sure not only what the Girls are, but also what the price is.

ROGER, ROGER

One (yes, yet *another* one!) of the underestimated capabilities of 8-bit computers is in amateur radio work. Apparently, quite a lot of commercial software for this was once commonplace on Spectrums, and **Short Wave Magazine** still runs a column called **ShackWare** with many references to using older computers. Jerry Glenwright edits this.

The assistant editor, Kevin Nice, lived up to his name by sending me a reprint of the February issue where **8BIT** got a mention in **ShackWare**, by courtesy of our mutual reader, Trevor James.

I would very much like to run a feature of this more unusual byway of 8-bit computing. If you feel you could write such a piece, I would be very pleased to hear from you.

DISK SHORTAGE, WHAT DISK SHORTAGE?

No sooner had **8BIT** number 15 hit the subscribers' mats registering Joyce Cook's difficulties obtaining Double Density 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " disks, than I started to be bombarded (in the nicest way) with details of sources of supplies.

First up was Philip Bayliss with news that Viking Direct, a national office supplies retailer with a mail

order service have stocks of both 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " DS/DD disks as well as ribbons, cartridges, etc (orders over £30 are shipped "carriage free"). Their freephone number is 0800 424444.

Next in the post came Alan Carey with his report of Argos advertising 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " DS/DDs as item 12 on page 525 of their current catalogue at £2.50 for 10. He also found them in WH Smith. Dave Blake has used own-brand DS/DD discs from Dixons, and WH Smith and has found them both reliable, and Currys do them too.

In all cases I don't know if these retailers are planning to supply into the future. Joyce seemed to suggest it was at the *wholesale* level (one step back from the retailers) that things were drying up. As with the periodic worries about 3" discs, we shall see. I suspect there will be many false starts, or should that be false endings?

On the subject of 3" discs, by the way, I hear that an entrepreneur is planning another run of 1000. That doesn't sound an economic quantity to me, but we shall see.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Keith Simons has responded to my appeal for information on the convention in some publications of leaving one space after a comma, and two spaces after a full stop.

He suspects it is or was a convention of typewriting and may derive from the differences in the lengths of the different pauses in spoken English after each type of punctuation. He presumed my radio work would confirm this.

Well, no. While it *is* a fact that all broadcasters (me included) speak faster, quieter and less distinctly when older people are listening, the pauses used after punctuation remain resolutely the same.

Also, if the spaces are doing the work of determining the pause when a

piece of text is spoken, why bother changing the punctuation from comma to full stop (or colon, or semi-colon)?

I am supposed to have an IQ of 152, allegedly, and I know **8BIT** is read by several members of MENSA, so does *anyone* have the definitive answer to this? Until we do, I shall stick with one space after any piece of punctuation in the interests of conserving paper.

QL CQ - continued from last issue

Another wad of responses came to my casual enquiry for news of any QL support groups. I must plead guilty of a little guile here.

While it is true that I tried to contact several QL groups in the early days of **8BIT** with only very limited response, I *do* know that the **Einstein Magazine/All Micros News** and many of the Spectrum user groups maintain good links with those with a preference for QL computing. What my enquiry has done has drawn a lot of the helpful information together in one place; here. So, from all those kind souls who responded, here is a QL contact list to be going on with.

The QL group QUANTA's chairman is Roy Brereton who can be reached on 01275 871917. Thank you, Edward Foster and Tony Adams for that.

OH SIT DOWN, OH SIT DOWN...

That James (hence the heading) Waddington is trying to get his chum's head re-aligned. Actually it is the chum's C64's 1541 disc drive head which needs the service but it amounts to almost the same thing. Any offers? See James' **Classix** advertisement elsewhere for contact details.

RUNNING OUT OF ROOM

This issue has published all the **NEWS** and **SHORTS** items to hand, so there are less full articles than usual. This will be remedied in the next issue of **8BIT**.

COMMODORE - FOR SALE

5.25" discs for sale. Black & various colours. £5 for 25 + p&p. Lucky dip C64 PD discs. 10 different for £5 incl p&p. 64/128 productivity software, games, books and hardware. Send for new lists (a stamp would be appreciated). Michael D Pearson, 31 Saxon Close, Stratford on Avon, Warks CV37 7DX. REF:3

C64 software. Tapes, disks and cartridges. SAE for massive list. Alan, 18 West Street, Gedington, Northants NN14 1BD REF:3

Commodore 64 with manual + many extras, £20 + p&p. Contact Brian Watson c/o 8BIT. REF:2

COMMODORE - WANTED

Help manual or photocopy for MP1270 printer - codes and DIP settings would help. Mark Surridge, COLCHESTER (01206) 792155 REF:3

COMMODORE 64/128 - MISC

If you own a C64/128, you need **COMMODORE SCENE**; bi-monthly and packed with all the news and views from the Commodore world. Send an A5 SAE to **COMMODORE SCENE**, c/o Richard Bowen, 35, Nottingham Road, Nuthall, NOTTINGHAM NG16 1DN. Mention **8BIT** for a free disk of software with your first order. REF:C

AMSTRAD CPC - FOR SALE

The Bomb Room is a new Freescape Solid 3D game for Amstrad CPCs. Set inside the Rebel Headquarters, you must find and disarm their ultimate weapon; a nuclear bomb! Available on 3" disk (the game, that is, not the bomb...) Cheque/Postal Order for £6.99 (overseas £7.99) payable to MJ Bela, 11, Colwell Drive, Brookside, Alvaston, Derbs DE24 0UP REF:3

Amstrad CPC6128 computer. Lots of extras including romboxes, 3½" disc drive, datacorder, lots of discs. Tel: 018206 30189 or write to William Derrick Ervine, 7, Back Road, Rathfriland, Co Down, N Ireland BT34 5QF for list. REF:3

CPC software. Tapes & discs. SAE for massive list. Alan, 18 West Street, Gedington, Northants NN14 1BD REF:3

Tape/disc games and GX4000 kit. Duncan Tizzard, *Folly Farm*, Cold Ashton, CHIPPENHAM, Wilts SN14 8JR. 01225 891014 REF:1

Unusual CPC464 keyboard with the Spanish layout, £10 + p&p or possible free delivery. Tel: Brian Watson 01353 (ELY) 777006 REF:3

Large list of 2nd hand CPC tape and disc software and hardware at sensible prices. Originals c/w instructions. Send 1st class stamp and return label for lists. Brian Watson, c/o 8BIT magazine. REF:C

AMSTRAD CPC - WANTED

WACCI 4-15, 19, 22. Also **CPC464** User magazine issue 2 for October & November 1984. Telephone Christine on 0115 (NOTTINGHAM) 913 3181 REF:3

ACUs Sep '90, Dec '84 to Feb '85, CWTA Vol 1 No8, Vol 2 No10, Amtix 1, 4, 5, 11 to 14. Plus other CPC paper and disc magazines. Also whatever you want in exchange for a full set of AA or just 1 & 2. Peter Curgenvin, *The Hollyar*, Bay Road, Trevone Bay, Near Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8QZ. Tel: 01841 520875 REF:2

CPC - MISCELLANEOUS

King Arthur's Domain is a disc PD library for the CPC. Utilities, games, music, clip art, a large selection of CP/M programs, and lots more. For catalogue, send 3"/3½" disc + SSAE to: **KAD**, *Brympton Cottage*, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ. REF:C

GD.PD: The ultimate in CPC PD software at only 25p per disc (copy charge). For the GD.PD list send an SSAE to: Dave Stitson, 6, Connaught Avenue, Mutley, PLYMOUTH, Devon PL4 7BX REF:C

User manual for CPC6128. Mark Surridge, COLCHESTER (01206) 792155 REF:3

AMSTRAD PCW - FOR SALE

Original software LocoScript and CP/M on 3" disk to fit Amstrad word processors, new, £10. keyboard to fit PCW10/PCW9256 £6. Dot matrix printer to fit PCW10, excellent working order, £25. Ability integrated software for PC1512/1640 inc manuals and 5¼" disks, sealed unopened £5. 01388 (BISHOP AUKLAND) 606744. REF:3

PCW256/512 complete Datatwin external 3½" drives (3" A&B still operable), 3 covers, screen filter, Supercalc2, LocoSpell, LocoFile, LocoScript1/2/3, DTPublisher, Iankey 2 Fingers, all manuals and CP/M+. 8000/PCW Plus, 4 & 7-124, 2 Tips Collections, 3" drive head cleaning kit. 8 new 3" discs, 10 3½" discs. Telephone 01787 (CLARE, Suffolk) 277622 The lot for £150. REF:2

LocoScript 2.29 with LocoSpell and LocoMail as supplied for 9512 3" disc and CP/M Plus as supplied for 9512 3" disc. Never been used - both for £15 Phone 01273 (Peacehaven) 583050 after 6pm REF:2

Sigma Press "Picture Processing on the PCW" book and disc with Drawmon program and manual. Masters on 3" discs but 3½" added on request, £20. Used 3" discs, 6 for £6. Plastic cases for 3" discs, 9 for £2.50. Alan Kimber on 0181 866 (London) 1272. Ref:3

AMSTRAD PCW - WANTED

Can you help? Wanted: a set of PCW 8512 master CP/M discs. Also a decent general purpose PCW database program. Mark Weir, 24 Eastmount, Newtonards, Co.Down, N Ireland BT23 8SE. REF:1

8000+ and PCW Plus issues 1 to 62 inclusive. Tel: 01733 (PETERBOROUGH) 261234 REF:2

For PCW 9512+, a hard drive and any 3½" 720k software. All reasonable offers considered. Also issue 2 of 8000 Plus. Tel: Gary on 01582 (LUTON, Beds) 483894 eves and weekends. Thanks. REF:2

AMSTRAD PCW - WANTED - continued

Technique PCW102 keyboard in good working condition. N Bannister, Telephone: 01732 374732 (GRAYS, Essex). REF:1

For Printmaster PD graphics files, particularly XLIB2, and any others not available through PD libraries. Write to Mr E Heron, PO Box 288, Morden, Surrey SM4 5SW REF:3

AMSTRAD PCW - MISCELLANEOUS

Crawley PCW Club meets on the first Thursday of each month except August. A Club helpline is available for members. For further details write to the Chairman/Secretary John Fisher at *Pradines*, Four Elms Road, EDENBRIDGE, TN8 6AF. REF:C

For a low-cost public domain PCW/PCW clipart copying & scanning service. For full details send a SAE, a formatted 3.5" disc, and 50p to: PD Blake, 32, Sample Avenue, Beverley, East Yorks HU17 9DW. REF:C

Berkshire Amstrad PCW Users Club offers you FREE telephone support, magazine/book/machine loan, access to bulletin boards, newsletter, etc. Special offers; eg 3" discs only £10 per 10. SAE for details to Ed Harris, 121, Bullbrook Drive, BRACKNELL, Berks RG12 2QR. REF:C

Globe-trotting, or just interested? Contact **Capital Computer Club**, c/o Ray C Petersen (the Secretary), 21, Mapplebeck Street, Titahi Bay, Porirua, New Zealand. The Club now has members with Amstrads (all sorts), Amigas, Macs, Sanyos and PCs with DOS and CP/M. They are well up to date with PCW news. New members are welcome at each monthly meeting. REF:C

TRACK is the name of the very useful free advertising feature section of **SCOTWEST.pcw**, the magazine of the PCW Club of the same name. For more details contact David Williams, 32/34, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, MOTHERWELL ML1 4JL Scotland. 01698 732403. REF:C

The **Corwall PCW Club** meets on the second Saturday of each month (July and August excepted) in St Austell. All those interested in PCWs are most welcome to join us. Details from John Walker on 01752 (Plymouth) 706266. REF:C

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - FOR SALE

Sinclair Spectrum tapes, discs and roms for sale from 35p each. Send a large SSAE for my list to Mrs P Fuller, 4 Whitehouse Cottages, Sot's Hole Bank, Holbeach St Matthews, Lincs PE12 8EJ. REF:3

Spectrum +3 software for sale. SAE to: Nick Cheesman, 70, Wellesley Close, Avondale Ash Vale, ALDERSHOT, Hants GU12 5SP REF:1

Spectrum software. Tapes & discs. SAE for massive list. Alan, 18 West Street, Gedington, Northants NN14 1BD REF:3

Over 50 tapes for sale (some with manuals), incl The Hobbit, 6 Flight Simulations, Zeus Assembler, Masterfile, Chipchek, Autokopy, Pinball Wizard, £10 the lot inc UK postage. Trevor, tel 01904 (York) 704595 - answerphone. REF:2

Light gun, games, etc etc Duncan Tizzard, *Folly Farm*, Cold Ashton, CHIPPENHAM, Wilts SN14 8JR. 01225 891014 REF:1

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - WANTED

For a Spectrum+3; a 3½" B: disc drive and connecting cable (also large format software?). Details to David Williams, 24/24, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403 REF:3

ALL FORMATS - MISCELLANEOUS

3" discs available. Used on domestic (hobby) programs only. All re-formatted. Mostly with cases. 5 for £6 including postage. Would also suit any computers with a 3" drive. 01202 (BOURNMOUTH) 527730 REF:2

BBC 5¼" original educational boxed programs suitable for primary

school ages. 'Advanced Folio' (word processor, ESM) £5, 'Dinosaur Discovery' (adventure, 4mation) £2, 'Crack-it' (puzzles, ESM) £1, 'Table Adventures' (multiplication, Acornsoft) £1, 'Worlds Without Words' (adventure, 4mation) £3, 'Red Riding Hood' (maths, Selective) £1. Postage extra at cost. Rod Holt 01703 (HYTHE, Hants) 846995. REF:2

ALL FORMATS - MISCELLANEOUS

Wanted: manuals, software, parts - all for an old RM Link 480z. Also I have a Spectrum Emulator on PC but my CD-ROM is broken down. Please could anyone send me software for the Spectrum on PC-Formatted 3½" disk? Tel: Robert on 01865 (OXFORD) 351443 REF:1

Drive belts for 3" mechanisms including CPCs, PCWs, PCs, Spectrum +3s. Include easy to follow fitting instructions. £2.45 inc P&P from AJ Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM, Kent BR3 3ED REF:C

The UK CPM User Group (CPMUKUG) is now defunct, but the disc library is not. UK volumes are now up to number 130. For a catalogue, send a formatted disc to Rodney Hannis, 34, Falmouth Road, READING, RG2 8QR. 01734 876641. Please include return postage - no other charges. REF:C

Are you a user of an Amstrad NC100 or 200 notepad? If you believe there is some benefit to be gained by linking together such users please phone John Walker on 01752 (PLYMOUTH) 706266 and we will take it from there. REF:C

The **Protext User Club** is free to all users of the **Protext** family of programs on *all* computers. For further details, send 2 1st class stamps and/or a disc (any format) LABELLED WITH YOUR NAME ON IT to **Protext Software** c/o 8BIT magazine. REF:C

Did you know? The **IEBA** (The Independent Eight Bit Association) is a group active in promoting the use of 8-bit computers. The second edition of their **Directory of 8-bit**

ALL FORMATS - MISCELLANEOUS - contd

Services is now imminent and is free to members. Life Membership is £5. For further details send 2 1st class stamps to IEBA Secretary Brian Watson c/o 8BIT magazine. REF:C

For SAM sales and support: Bob Brenchley, **Format Publications**, 34, Bourton Road, GLOUCESTER GL4 0LE. Send large SAE for details. REF:C

Einstein Magazine and All Micro News is the magazine of the **Steam Computer Society** - 10 years old and still going strong! Write to AE (Tony) Adams, *Ivy Cottage*, Church Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8TY, enclosing a large envelope and two first class stamps for more details. REF:C

Disk conversions: Amstrad 3" to 3 1/2" to PC to Mac and back. Also high quality laser printing from any disk. For costs and details (charged by disk or time) contact Mike Harris at Disk Conversions, 9, Wootton Way, CAMBRIDGE, CB3 9LX. or telephone: 01223 363259. REF:C

The Sharp Users Club. Write to the secretary; Andrew Ferguson, 11, Harcourt Close, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 1UZ, or telephone 01491 574850 for further details. REF:C

LOADS OF GOODIES for your CPC, PCW, Spectrum, Apricot, Games console: Tapes, Discs, Roms, Books, Magazines and Hardware. For list send A5 SSAE to: *Brympton Cottage*, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ. REF:C

CP/M Support: The PD Software Library, *Winscombe House*, Beacon Road, CROWBOROUGH, Sussex. (Tel: 01892 663298) owns large volumes of CP/M software from all over the globe. Send A5 SAE for their CP/M catalogue. REF:C

Just think: your 50 word advertisement (free to subscribers) could be in this space, finding or selling software or help for you and your computing. Next copy date is June 15th, 1997.

SMALL WORKS DEPT *The section for offers of help and repairs at fair prices.* Please help those mentioned by enclosing return postage and a sensibly-sized SAE with each request for help.

For PCW help you can try Anthony Hill, joint co-ordinator of the Heads of the Valleys PCW User Group, at 20, Velindre Place, Whitchurch, CARDIFF CF4 2AN. Please enclose an SAE and say which PCW you have if you write. He actually *prefers* phone calls which can be made to either 01222 618012 or 01829 271515, one of which should find him.

A Nigel (who I suspect may be surnamed Calcutt - BW) offers low-cost repairs for any CPC (and its accessories). He may also be able to help with other computers, so try him at 14, Blakeney Crescent, Melton Mowbray, Leics LE13 0QR.

Lloyd Garland, the proprietor of **Alchemist Software**, has offered to assist with any Spectrum-related 'techy' queries and problems. His address is 126, Hayward Road, Redfield, BRISTOL BS5 9QA.

For help on Spectrum problems, or general hints, tips, and advice on 8-bit emulators, write or telephone Alchemist Research, 62, Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, SHEFFIELD S13 7LN. Telephone: 0114 269 7644. No costs, but if you can send an SAE and (where necessary) relevant blank media, it will help us to process your query much faster.

Commodore 64 Technical advice:- If you have a technical problem on a C64/128 write to; Andrew Fisher, the former technical consultant to **Commodore Format** and **Commodore Force** at 30, Rawlyn Road, CAMBRIDGE CB5 8NL England. Enclose a SSAE or an Intl Reply Coupon for a fast reply.

For help on CPC-related problems, try Philip DiRichleau, (editor of **WACCI** magazine), Ground Floor Flat, 121, Ripon Road, LINCOLN Lincs LN5 7NG. Write to him explaining your problem, or you can phone him on 01522 511608. If Philip cannot help

(and he probably will be able to) he will find someone who can.

Amstrad PCW8256/8512 parts for DIY repair: 3" drives, CPU boards, Power boards, Tubes, Keyboards, printers, etc. Also some books and software. Advice freely given. SAE please for lists and info. Ron King, 19, Stancliffe Road, BEDFORD, Beds MK41 9AN REF:C

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Royal Bride, Duncan Noble's 3rd Transcarpathian Novel available (post free) @ £5.99 from: Emissary Publishing, Freeport, PO Box 33, Bicester, Oxon, OX6 7PP. Also: **Christmas at Zeldau** @ £5.50, **Coronation at Stanlitz** @ £5.99, or all in a boxed set. Tales of intrigue in 19th century Balkans. REF:3

COPY REQUIREMENTS

A recently revised printed copy of 8BIT's requirements for all advertising copy and other articles which are to be submitted for publishing in the magazine is now available in return for for a large SAE to Brian Watson at the usual address.

There are simplifications and standardisations and other updates, which may save contributors wasting their time on producing copy which cannot subsequently be used or re-sized in time for a particularly preferred publication date.

LATE ENTRIES

None

NEXT COPY DATE

The date for copy to be included in the next regular issue of 8BIT, which will be published early in July 1996, is 15th June 1997.

If the proposed special 'conscience salving catch-up' issue appears in the mean time, the numbering sequence will be maintained (somehow).

THE LEGAL STUFF: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, copyright on all content of **8BIT** or its predecessor **8BIT Mart**, is held by Brian Watson and/or the relevant author, but may be freely reproduced as long as **8BIT's** name, full address, and phone number are credited as the source. I can supply copies of any articles on disc, but phone to agree a disc format which suits both.

DISCLAIMER: All contents of **8BIT** are published on the basis that they are opinion or believed true at the time of publication. I'm doing my best, but no liability can be accepted by Brian Watson or contributors for any loss or damage, distress or upset, however caused. I am careful to try to supply a realistic value to any hunch, belief, opinion, rumour or fact but clangers can still happen. So, "Sorry if I get something wrong, please tell me if/when it happens so that I can set the record straight."

THE REAL WORLD: Pressures on my time of family, business, hobbies and deadlines mean individual replies to letters cannot be guaranteed, promptly or at all. I'm not (I hope) rude, I'm just a very busy person.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Details of **8BIT's** subscribers are not divulged without their express or strongly implied permission.

LOW-COST REPAIRS: There is a thriving network of low-cost repairers for small jobs on older computers such as replacing drive belts or drives (keeping old parts for spares). With supplies of older kit (especially peripherals) dwindling, it can be cheaper to replace an item than have it repaired, resulting in *working* parts of the failed item being lost when it goes in the bin. To minimise costs, especially on larger items, I am prepared to offer a free courier service throughout East Anglia, the East Midlands, and London. **8BIT**, especially the **MISCELLANEOUS** and **SMALL WORKS** sections, are the best places for appeals for (or offers of) help finding a low-cost solution. I assume permission to publish is implied with any letter received unless otherwise stated.

COMING AT THE BEGINNING OF JULY: A writers special edion of **8BIT**, with **The Big Feature** on how to get your work published and, more important perhaps, get paid for it. Plus all the stuff which I didn't have space for this issue. Copy date for that **8BIT** is 15th June 1997, with publication at the beginning of July 1997. There may *also* be an extra issue (with no advertisements) *before* then to clear my conscience and files of all the articles which are overdue for publication.

EVEN FURTHER UP THE PIPE: Future **Big Features** are already planned, and in preparation, on Spreadsheets, The Great Games, Genealogy, and more. Plus, it is hoped, someone will offer an article on the mighty Spectrum in the "I've got a ... now what can I do with it?" occasional series. It needs to be reasonably well-written, and cover the differences and range of possible uses of the various models in the series, together with software and peripherals a new owner really should consider looking out for.

The Great British Word Processor!

Protext is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW; and it also happens to be the best value word processor on the Amstrad CPC too. **Protext** is used to produce most of **8BIT**. On one disc, the program features include:

- logical keystrokes
- "plain English" commands
- free tutor file on disc
- fast text handling
- Network, hard disc, MicroDesign and LocoScript compatibility
- mail-merging and spell-checking *at no extra cost*
- *free printer support for any printer*; use your printer's built-in fonts or colour capability without any additional expense
- *free* user support is included in the purchase price, and the **Protext** helpline operates at normal telephone rates
- **Protext** handles printing in columns and colour with ease
- simply configured for more advanced purposes
- **Protext** can easily produce ASCII files to let you transfer the text between computers, either by software or by e-mail
- the *free* **Protext** Users' Club is available to all **Protext** users for the open exchange of tips, templates, and information

Protext has had 12 years continuous development. Above all, **Protext** remains fast and very easy to use. The user-friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout it's development. It is impossible to cover everything here. For further information on **Protext** and many other items for users of CPCs and PCWs, send an A4 SAE to **Harrowden**, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA. **CP/M Protext**, the 'one-disc' word processing solution, costs just £25 (including p&p) from **ComSoft**, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, GLASGOW G31 2HW. Orders may be placed by phone on 0141 554 4735, quoting credit card details. Please quote your computer model and drive A: size when ordering.